

LAIB in Prison: A report on qualitative data from patients commenced on treatment during a clinical trial

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Introduction: Long-acting injectable buprenorphine (LAIB) is increasingly used in Criminal Justice Settings (CJS). However, little is known about the experience of patients on XR-BUP in the CJS.

Methods: Short-answer treatment preference and acceptability data were collected as part of the Understanding NSW Long-Active Opioids in Custody-Treatment (UNLOC-T) study, a prospective open-label case comparison trial comparing LAIB to methadone. Participants were recruited November 2018 - July 2019 and included men and women ≥18 years old with moderate to severe opioid use disorder (OUD) serving a custodial sentence of ≥6 months. Thematic analysis of short answer data underwent open, refined, and axial coding to identify themes by 1 coder.

Results: Of the 67 participants, 55 (82%) were male, the median age was 33 (STD 7.51) and there were 28 Aboriginal participants (42%). Five primary themes emerged: medication efficacy, social and relational considerations, dosing frequency, financial aspects and health and wellbeing. Participants also discussed XR-BUP's potential impact on prison release, including family considerations.

Discussions and Conclusions: This study presents one of the first qualitative studies on XR-BUP in custodial settings. It identified factors that are important to successful treatment by individuals with OUD in the CJS.

Implications for Practice or Policy: This information could help to improve the way treatment is introduced or delivered to people contemplating XR-BUP treatment in the CJS, and moreover, to better support people when they are reintegrating into the community upon release. There are also lessons for prescribers when consenting patients and broader policy considerations regarding XR-BUP uptake promotion. More research is required to understand the acceptability of XR-BUP for people outside of the UNLOC-T study.

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